

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 (currently amended): A device for holding a sheetlike article on a movable underlying surface for transporting the sheetlike article at least in one direction selected from the group thereof consisting of a direction into and a direction out of an operating station having printing heads, the device comprising:

a movable belt formed with through-passage holes, said belt having a surface underlying the sheetlike article, the sheetlike article being retainable by pneumatic pressure on said surface; and

a screening device disposed locally fixedly with respect to the operating station, said screening device serving for reducing an airflow in a region of the printing heads at least with respect to adjacent regions, the reduction in the airflow resulting from the sheetlike article being held on said underlying surface, said screening device including:

a cover plate disposed beneath said belt, said cover plate formed with pass-through openings; and

a sheet-like mesh formed with holes and disposed beneath said cover plate, the holes of said mesh being of such number and size to cause, as a result of flow resistance

thereof, an adequate reduction in the airflow in the region of the printing heads; and

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cont.*

a virtually limited first suction chamber disposed beneath the region of the printing heads, said first suction chamber having termination edges extending transversely to a transporting direction of said movable belt and limiting said first suction chamber in a longitudinal direction of said movable belt.

Claim 2 (currently amended) : The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein the printing unit is an heads are ink-jet unit heads.

Claims 3-4 (cancelled)

Claim 5 (currently amended) : The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, including a virtually limited first suction chamber disposed beneath the region of the printing unit and a negative-pressure source, said screening device having a throttle opening, said first suction chamber being connected to said negative-pressure source via said throttle opening.

Claim 6 (previously amended) : The holding and transporting device according to claim 5, including further suction

chambers connected to said negative-pressure source, said further suction chambers being located adjacent said first suction chamber and having a greater negative pressure than that of said first suction chamber.

Claim 7 (previously amended): The holding and transporting device according to claim 6, wherein said cover plate covers said suction chambers and serves for guiding said belt.

Claim 8 (original): The holding and transporting device according to claim 7, wherein said mesh is connected to said cover plate.

Claim 9 (original): The holding and transporting device according to claim 8, wherein the connection of said mesh to said cover plate is a connection selected from the group thereof consisting of integral and releasable connections.

Claim 10 (original): The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said underlying surface is on a continuous transport belt formed with holes around the length thereof and guidable in given sections by said cover plate.

Claim 11 (original): The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said pneumatic pressure is

selected from the group thereof consisting of positive and negative pressures.

Claim 12 (previously added) : The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein pass-through openings of said cover plate in the region of the printing heads have a smaller pass-through surface area than pass-through openings outside the region.

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Claim 13 (previously added) : The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said mesh only applies in areas where the printing heads are located.

Amendments to the Specification

The paragraph starting on page 14, line 23 and ending on page 15, line 14 now reads as:

Referring now to the drawings and, first, particularly to Fig. 1 thereof, there is illustrated therein a drive roller 1 for driving a transport belt 3 which is wrapped around four deflecting or diverting rollers 2. The drive roller 1 is driven uniformly by a non-illustrated drive, for example, an electric motor, so that the drive roller 1 revolves continuously during the printing operation. Paper sheets, which are not shown in Fig. 1, are located on the top section or taut belt strand 11 of the transport belt 3 during the printing operation, the paper sheets moving on the belt strand 11 in Fig. 1 from the righthand side to the lefthand side in the direction of the arrows R. Two printing heads 5 are also shown in Fig. 1, above the belt strand 11, these printing heads #1 5 being spaced a very slight distance from the transport belt 3 and thus, consequently, from the non-illustrated paper sheets disposed thereon. These printing heads 5 may have several hundred nozzles and may thus be of considerable dimensions.
